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# Washington Merry-Go-Round

by JACK ANDERSON

WASHINGTON — Tough-talking Howard Phillips, brought in to dismantle the Office of Economic Opportunity, is actually hiring more than 300 new employes at a cost to the taxpayers of $1 million.

Many are right-wing cronies, with his same Young Americans for Freedom background, who are now pulling down fancy, $100-a-day wages. Others are refugees from the Committee to Re-Elect the President who had been looking for some way to tap the GOP money machine.

Even as Phillips was explaining to Congress how much he is doing to save money by closing off programs for the poor and firing veteran anti-poverty workers, he asked the Civil Service Commission to let him hire more employes. Estimates from Administration budget officials are that Phillips' final hiring spree will cost the government $1 million by the time he shuts down the OEO on June 30.

What the splurge amounts to is hiring people to fire people, a clear violation of the spirit and perhaps the letter of Civil Service regulations.

The erratic Phillips has even given some of his favorites temporary promotions and managerial jobs so they can collect higher wages when OEO finally closed and they move on to claim other federal jobs available to deserving Republicans. Almost as incredibly, Phillips is actually providing some of his new hands with shiny new furniture from the General Services Administration, at still more cost to the taxpayers.

Asked about Phillips' odd way of closing down the OEO, a spokesman said OEO was short of clerical help and needed experts to make sure employment rights were protected and to see that the closedown took place "in an orderly manner."

Footnote: Phillips has also found enough money to buy 30 American flags and stands for his patriotic lieutenants at a cost of more than $50 each. A spokesman said they were bought to counter anti-Nixon, "anti-American" posters at OEO headquarters.